

The newspapers and Democratic Party leaders kept abreast of the events in Washington in order to prepare for the possibility of federal intervention. Two days after the riot it was reported that the president had consulted with his attorney general and cabinet on the matter but that "it was too late to interfere" since, as far as they knew, all was quiet. The president and his advisors stressed that the troops would be called out only if hostilities in the city or state began anew. Compounding the situation was the fact that hostilities had also broken out in neighboring South Carolina. Some speculated that the two unsettled areas, when taken together, could in time warrant federal intervention.¹¹

¹¹ The Democratic campaign was successful in stirring violent racist sentiment throughout the state. Cities such as New Bern and Wilson expected violence at any moment, and expressed anxiety similar to the fears that gripped Wilmingtonians. On the night of November 9, a riot almost broke out in Wilson. Only after a biracial meeting on the tenth and the outbreak in Wilmington was violence averted. Prior to the election, there was a violent outbreak in the Lumberton area. Called the Ashpole Riot in the Kinston *Daily Free Press*, the violence was contained to late October. Violence broke out before election day in Phoenix, in Greenwood County, South Carolina. On November 6, 1898, four black men were lynched by about 100 white men after they were implicated in killing a white man the previous day. Further news of the violence in South Carolina reported that about ten black men and one white were killed outright, and many of both races were wounded on election day. A number of whites fled the area and made their way to Washington, D.C., to plead their case with the president. Regarding the unrest, the *New York Journal* indicated that the "race problem in the South has cast a shadow over the entire land by the recent bloodshed in the Carolinas." Therefore, as advocates for federal intervention in Wilmington sought to thrust the city's violence into the national spotlight, the murders in South Carolina were added to the discussions. Thus, the response was diffused as the two incidents grew to be seen as examples of a larger, endemic problem of racial friction. *New York Journal* as quoted in the *Farmer and Mechanic*

Federal troops were, in fact, moved from nearby Fort Caswell into the city, but, by the time they arrived, relative calm was re-established through martial law, and the new city leaders were working to encourage peace. Those federal troops saw more trouble later in the month when about 30 black workers who were working on the fort got into a "row" with several soldiers stationed there. The resulting fight ended with a stabbing of one soldier. Other soldiers tried to retaliate against the workers, and a guard detail had to be established to protect the black men.¹² Some speculation has arisen that the president failed to step in because the recent victorious end of the Spanish-American War had engendered national unity and patriotic fervor, North and South, which many did not want to upset.¹³ Some southerners contended that

(Raleigh), November 29, 1898; *Farmer and Mechanic* (Raleigh), November 15, 1898; *News and Observer* (Raleigh), November 11, 12, 1898; *Evening Dispatch* (Wilmington), November 12, 1898; *Morning Star* (Wilmington), November 10, 11, 18, 1898; *Morning Post* (Raleigh), November 13, 1898; *Daily Free Press* (Kinston), October 24, 1898.

¹² Hayden, *WLI*, 98; *Morning Star* (Wilmington), November 28, 1898.

¹³ An example of the new bond between the North and South was a speech given by President McKinley in Atlanta as part of a "peace jubilee." McKinley said that "sectional lines no longer mar the map of the United States" and that "the cordial feeling now happily existing between the North and the South" would be helpful if the two sections faced "new problems now pressing upon us" together. Some African Americans took exception to the speech, particularly since McKinley held an "incomprehensible silence" on the issue when he did not acknowledge the "race problem" in the South and the recent violence. Former North Carolina Republican Reconstruction politician Albion Tourgee wrote McKinley that he feared the violence heralded the opening of a new chapter in race relations in which blacks were "again placed under the heel of race prejudice in the United States." Tourgee saw a larger sweeping national movement tied to the Spanish-American War that enabled national leaders to ignore southern blacks and leave them to the devices of southern whites. An example of northern